

INFORMATION REPORT

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COUNTRY Korea

SUBJECT Friction in North Korean Politics

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1. The North Korean government is largely dominated by natives of Hamgyong Province, both because of their revolutionary past and because of their association with Soviet leadership outside of Korea. The situation is represented, however, by the natives of Pyongan Province and especially the citizens of Pyongyang, although the two provinces were fairly closely united in the past.
2. During the Japanese administration of Korea, people of Hamgyong formed the backbone of Communist movements. Moreover, many leaders who received instruction and training in China and the USSR were from Hamgyong - for example, CH'OE Ch'ang-ik (崔昌益), CHU Yong-ha (朱寧河), CH'OE Yong-kon (崔錫健), MU Chong (武呈), HAN Pin (韓彬), KIM Ch'ang-man (金昌滿) and others. The Hamgyong group, therefore, received many appointments to higher offices in the new North Korean government after the war, sometimes simply on the basis of association and of Communist background, regardless of criminal records.
3. With many of the higher offices filled by Hamgyong men, the natives of the province flocked into the lower level appointments also. In government and North Korean Labor Party key positions, the Hamgyong natives have a solid control. Most of the important administrative posts and commands of military and garrison units on the borders are held by Hamgyong citizens. Within the offices, security control is also exercised by this clique, who permit important documents to be handled only by one of their own number. Their discrimination against natives of other areas is felt by the other natives to be quite as great as that shown in the past by the Japanese to the Koreans.
4. The Hamgyong attitude is felt most keenly by the people of Pyongan, since the capital, Pyongyang, is situated in their province. Although they are primarily interested in business rather than in politics, they resent the removal of all their leaders, such as CHO Man-sik (曹晚植), a religious and intellectual figure in Pyongyang, who was imprisoned. So strong is the resentment of Pyongan that most of its citizens have withdrawn completely from even minor political appointments.

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5. The Pyongan group, however, utilize several means of passive resistance against the politically dominant faction. Hotel owners in Pyongyang, for example, often refuse to admit Hamgyong guests with the excuse that no room is available. Throughout the government, the Pyongan men withhold cooperation and present any obstructions they can. Although the hostility between the two factions has not reached an overt level, the feeling persists and grows, and it is believed in Pyongan that it will eventually result in violence or spark a counter-revolution.

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